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During the past season very thin layers of carbon with some resemblance to organic forms were found in the sandstones of Cotter Island; these have the appearance of lowly organized plant life, lower than the known fossils from the lowest beds of the Cambrian; and consequently this formation is older than the Cambrian. It is proposed, therefore to class these so-called Cambrian unaltered rocks as Laurentian, as they represent the oldest known sedimentary rocks in the northeast of America, and probably in the world.

West Virginia Geological Survey. Vol. I, Oil and Gas; Vol. II, Coal; and map showing the occurrence of coal, oil, and gas in West Virginia, By I. C. WHITE, State Geologist.

PROFESSOR I. C. WHITE, state geologist of West Virginia, has just issued a map showing the distribution of coal, oil, and gas areas in that state. The base of the map is topographic, with contours of 1,000 feet, and is, all in all, the most accurate map of the state which has ever been published. The map shows both the coal areas and the coal mines of the state. Of the former, the Pittsburg, the Allegheny-Kanawha, and the New River-Pocahontas are differentiated. In the aggregate, the coal areas cover nearly one-half of the state. The areas of natural gas and oil, though more restricted, are still extensive.

The map, just published, is a welcome supplement to the excellent volumes on Oil and Gas (Vol. I, issued in 1899), and Coal (Vol. II, issued in 1903). No state geological survey has issued economic reports of greater worth. While in the case of both volumes the treatment is primarily economic, the general structural relations of the Mississippian, Pennsylvanian, and Permian series, as developed in West Virginia, are clearly set forth.

R. D. S.

Geographic Influences in American History. By ALBERT PERRY BRIGHAM. The Chautauqua Press, 1903. Pp. x+366; 61 illustrations.

American History and its Geographic Conditions. By ELLEN CHURCHILL SEMPLE. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1903. Pp. 466; 16 maps.

THE above books are pioneers in a most interesting and important field, too long neglected. American history has been profoundly influenced by geological and geographical conditions. To ignore these controls is to make history very largely empirical. To recognize them is to go a long way toward making history a rational science. To

appreciate, for example, the geographic conditions which controlled every move of the contending armies of the Civil War in Virginia is to make intelligible a chapter of American history from which otherwise one gets but a confused, meaningless impression.

The scope of Professor Brigham's book is indicated by the chapter headings: "The Eastern Gateway of the United States;" "Shore-Line and Hilltop in New England;" "The Appalachian Barrier;" "The Great Lakes and American Commerce;" "The Prairie Country;" "Cotton, Rice, and Cane;" "The Civil War;" "Where Little Rain Falls;" "Mountain, Mine, and Forest." As these topics suggest, the author's view-point is always that of the geographer. The treatment of the subject is simple and somewhat popular, the book being designed primarily for a non-professional class of readers.

Miss Semple's book is a distinct contribution. The geographic influences which have shaped the trend of American history, from the discovery of the continent to the present, are treated in a scholarly and judicious manner. The inclusive character of the book is shown by the titles of the chapters: "The Atlantic States of Europe the Discoverers and Colonizers of America;" "The Rivers of North America in Early Exploration and Settlement;" "The Influence of the Appalachian Barrier upon Colonial History;" "The Westward Movement in Relation to the Physiographic Features of the Appalachian System;" "Geographical Environment of the Early Trans-Allegheny Settlements;" "The Louisiana Purchase in the Light of Geographic Conditions;" "Geography of the Atlantic Coast in Relation to the Development of American Sea Power;" "Geography of Sea and Land Operations in the War of 1812;" "Spread of Population in the Mississippi Valley as Affected by Geographic Conditions;" "Geographic Control of Expansion into the Far West: the Southern Routes;" "Expansion into the Far West by the Northern Trails;" "Growth of the United States to a Continental Power Geographically Determined;" "The Geography of the Inland Waterways;" "The Geography of the Civil War;" "Geographical Distribution of Immigration;" "Geographical Distribution of Cities and Industries;" "Geographical Distribution of Railroads;" "The United States in Relation to the American Mediterranean;" "The United States as a Pacific Ocean Power."

Miss Semple has been skilful in the selection of material from the great mass of scattered data. Irrelevant matters are invariably excluded, and the conclusions reached are generally fundamental. New light is

thrown on many topics. English success and French failure in North America are shown to have been largely due to geographic conditions. At the north the French followed every stream into the interior in quest of furs. "They spread themselves thin over an enormous area," and therefore failed. The Appalachian Barrier confined the English to the coast, and the many resulting advantages contributed to their success. It is popularly supposed that our possession of the Louisiana territory is due to a series of fortunate circumstances in European politics. Miss Semple shows that, once having passed the Appalachians, geographic conditions made it inevitable that the Americans should control the interior at least as far west as the Rockies.

The purchase of Louisiana was the occasion, not the cause, of the acquisition of the trans-Mississippi country. That must have come sooner or later. Even if the French had established themselves in Louisiana, they could not long have resisted the operation of geographic factors and the enterprising spirit of the western people, itself in part a product of environment. The trans-Mississippi region, hopelessly arid beyond the one-hundredth meridian, could never have supported a large enough population to resist the Americans, with whom the common navigation of the Mississippi would soon have brought them to blows. . . . Had England conquered Louisiana from France—the chance which Napoleon feared—even her superior colonizing methods could not have made the country support a population large enough to cope with the thickly planted American settlements in the wide, rich, well-watered regions to the east. In a conflict between a cis-Mississippi and a trans-Mississippi power, the former had every geographical condition in its favor—coast-line, rivers, climate, soil, and habitable area. The Americans were destined to hold the West. The purchase hastened and facilitated the process.

The excellent discussion of the War of 1812 throws much light on a period which, to be understood, must be approached from the geographic side. Geographic conditions made this a frontier war and controlled all operations. The author does not overestimate the importance of the geographic view-point when she says:

The sea-fights of this war, if studied merely in their chronological sequence as presented in the ordinary school histories, leave only a confused impression, of which the student, young or old, retains little at all and less that is valuable. But an analysis of the geographical distribution of these engagements reveals a wide underlying system which explains their purpose and brings order out of an apparent chaos.

The Gadsden Purchase has been almost universally condemned as a purchase involving the payment of an enormous price for a small

tract of worthless land. Miss Semple maintains that because of the great strategic importance of the Gila River depression as a passway to the coast, money was never better spent.

Miss Semple believes the most potent factor in American expansion to have been the abundance of free land. The exhaustion of the supply has led to a recent exodus of westerners into Canada, over 50,000 going in the three years following 1899. It is pointed out that we must look to the recently initiated national system of irrigation in the arid West for the checking of this migration.

The arrangement of the matter in the book is not always the best, and a very few important topics are slighted. For instance, the discovery of gold in California does not receive due emphasis as a factor in American expansion. Such shortcomings are few, however, and the book is to be heartily commended to all students of geography and history.

H. H. B.